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THE HELVETIAN QUARTET<sup>1</sup>

II and III: Nammēius and Verucloetius  
Caes. B. G. I. 7-8

In the drama of the Helvetian migration, as presented to us by Caesar, the real action is two or three years subsequent to the career of its first-named character. The fact that that personage had either lived or died seems not to have moved the balance up or down, now that the nation had once determined upon the exodus. And yet, though the Helvetians were doubtless relieved of an incubus in the death of Orgetorix, it may have been the spirit of the great leader that was still laboring among his people. It is not improbable that the enthusiasm he had engendered now brought them to a fulfillment of their long-cherished and much-elaborated plans. The migration was now at last to take place.

The appointed Fifth before the April Kalends was approaching. The tribes were assembling. There was but a bridge to cross. Caesar, reputed to be the new Governor of the Province, was far away in Rome, and, if all that had been said of him was true, he would be but a straw in the way. A political intriguer, who cared most for his personal appearance and plenty of money to squander and the acclaims of the populace at the games, who was a C. Julius Caesar when Helvetia chose to march?

What must have been the surprise of these, 'the bravest of the Gauls' (I. I), to find this lady's-man from Rome suddenly transported to the banks of the Rhone, with a scarlet cloak on, a soldier! He had cut away the bridge at Geneva—why had they not thought of that bridge? A legion was patrolling the south bank of the river. These were trifling matters, to be sure; but it seems now to have occurred to the Helvetians that, after all, it might be expedient to have an understanding with the new man from Rome, especially as he was so conveniently near and seemed to be asking an explanation. The sign 'No Trespassing' is written all over this world, but it is strange what indifferent attention the placard may command, unless there be a sponsor near at hand. These same Helvetians that had so promptly arrested their own misguided statesman and had insisted on a rigid enforcement of their own rights had yet thought to be independent of all international considerations. Their avowed policy meant nothing less than to transmit a living train that would reach, at the lowest estimate, thirty miles in length, through the possessions of others, presumably without harm to the latter, and eventually to preempt new territory by right of conquest and occupation. In the era of Gallic independence, when might was the ruling principle, the *ius gentium* was necessarily an almost unheard-of dictum. Accordingly, the Helvetians seem to have been sur-

prised to find other people disturbed over their proposed movements. That their neighbors and the Romans should enter protest was apparently a new factor in their calculations.

The legation that now waited upon Caesar would seem almost a farcical formality, as the subsequent attitude of the Helvetii proved. They were decided to make their march, and that too through the Province. Caesar's consent or refusal was wholly irrelevant to the issue. Quite probably they never dreamed that the new proconsul would manifest even the least hesitation in the face of so tremendous and awe-inspiring a military demonstration. The object of the embassy was, therefore, to satisfy mere technicalities or courtesies. Perhaps, to express it more roughly from the barbarian standpoint, it was to brush Caesar aside with as little friction as possible.

The language of the Helvetian ambassadors is not mere craft on the part of French ancestry. What appears to be personal shrewdness in Nammēius and his colleagues, in claiming to have but one route, and in pledging absolute restriction from plundering, may have been but the expression of a national motif, a fixed resolve, on the part of the tribe as a whole, a selfish determination to carry out their policy, irrespective of the havoc which that policy might work upon their fellow-creatures of the Province and greater Gaul.

Said Nammēius and Verucloetius, the Chairmen of the embassy, as they stood in the presence of the man they so little knew, "It is our intention to pass through the Province without working it any harm". Caesar may be misquoting them here, but, granting the correctness of the narration, had they said "It is our desire", instead of "our intention", it might have made a more kindly impression. They spoke the truth, for their determination had long been formed, only they had not reckoned upon Caesar's *intercessio*.

As to their "working no harm" in their passage—that was but a weak attempt at evasion. The lie and the impossibility of it were all too close to the surface. The Helvetians knew, and Caesar knew, but it sounded well. The red wake which the Cimbri had left behind them was all too recent an argument in refutation. And the final event in this case of the Helvetii proved the assumption. Some months later (I. II), after Caesar had been forced to return beyond the Alps for more troops and the Helvetians meanwhile had been left to make the Pas de l'Ecluse, the Haeduans waited upon the proconsul immediately upon his return, with a remonstrance couched in language of justifiable indignation, picturing all the horrors of an actual invasion; the Ambarri, their clansmen, added that they were wholly at the mercy of the conquerors; the

<sup>1</sup> See THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY, 2. 178-180.

Allobroges were in positive flight and were taking refuge with the Roman Governor. "Nothing but the actual soil itself is left to us now".

The Helvetians unfortunately have no defense, for we possess no picture of what they could do under restraint. Even without the testimony of Caesar, the conjecture would be strong that, after their final rebuff at Geneva and their subsequent disastrous attempt to force a passage over the governor's veto (1. 8), the invaders would make no effort to carry out their original conciliatory promises. When actuated by revenge, the leap to the other extreme would be an easy one—to do as much damage to the allies of Rome as was within their power. But when we find the tribe employing the mediation of Dumnorix and exchanging hostages with the Sequani, making the same overtures as they had to Caesar (1. 9), their ghastly tour down the banks of the Rhone and up the Arar is an argument that cannot be expunged. Dio Cassius (38. 32) credits them with having peremptorily broken faith with the Sequani. We probably have then a true narration of what the tribe was capable of doing under ordinary and natural circumstances. Caesar's assumption and reply to the Helvetians on this one score were therefore most justifiable. He well knew that, with all possible precautions, great damage would inevitably result from the transit of so great a body of people. And he doubtless knew too, just what Orosius has stated in his narrative, that, "after Orgetorix had been arrested and driven to his death, the rest of the nobility had been unable to restrain the masses of the people, now that they had once been aroused to the idea of plunder" (6. 7. 4). Evidently, one of the principal incentives toward the migration was this latter, the hope of plunder. Well was it for Caesar that his reasons for resisting the Swiss invasion were just and worthy, which, in truth be it said, cannot always be asserted of his pretexts.

As if to preclude all possible argument, Nammieus and Verucloetius now said, "We have no other way to go". There is almost an approach to irony in the way Caesar begins a previous chapter (6) with the statement "There were, in all, *two* roads by which they could leave home", and then, two chapters later, quotes without attempt at refutation this deliberate scheme of the Helvetian ambassadors to impose upon him. Nothing was said of the second road, the one eventually adopted; for the tribesmen had abandoned it as the more difficult and dangerous. The effrontery and duplicity of the Helvetians' argument were superb, but found a penalty in the summary way in which Caesar later taught them a *third* road they had not reckoned upon, the road back home again.

Their brief message was closed—indeed there had been but little to say—with the request that Caesar's sanction be permitted them.

The picture given us by Caesar's own hand, of this ancient international conference at Geneva, is very meager, true to the unity and brevity of his narration. The speech of the Helvetian envoys is necessarily brief. The reply of the Roman, as stated by the Roman himself, is yet briefer. Indeed, it was not a reply at all, but a postponement of it. Dio Cassius (38. 31) informs us that, while demanding two weeks in which to consider the proposition, Caesar yet threw out hopes to the Helvetians that there was a likelihood of his granting their request. It may be that Caesar actually did go to that extent in order to carry out his real designs and to prevent any hostile movements meanwhile on the part of the barbarians. Perhaps Caesar looked upon it as measure for measure. Nammieus and Verucloetius had attempted to present their fallacies in pacificatory language. Caesar in turn may have been parrying with them in the use of questionable diplomacy. His pretended overtures, if he really made any, only deepen the game of deception.

It may be that no direct statement on the part of Caesar, but his very act in delaying the moment of decision, was what really inspired the Helvetians with the conviction that a passage would eventually be granted them. Nammieus and his fellow legates may have read in this apparently weak postponement a confirmation of the impressions they had previously derived from the rumors about this same Caesar, the dilettante from Rome, now trying to pose as a soldier. Was he not plainly displaying a woeful lack of decision, in fact practically confessing his inability to act? What difference could a delay of two weeks make in the situation? After all, the weakling might as well have made immediate answer and have acknowledged the hopelessness of his position. Caesar was a coward, afraid to own his defeat and blindly putting off the day of surrender under a vain pretence of farther deliberation.

While Caesar's real or fancied attitude at this conference has been much discussed, the motive of the Helvetians too in accepting the proposal of an adjourned session is a problem. Either the Roman was insistent and carried his point against remonstrance, or the barbarians were entirely persuaded of his apparent good-intentions. Could there have been a smothered impatience that so foolish a pretext should block the way, or did Nammieus and Verucloetius leave Caesar's presence, satisfied in their own minds of the expediency of waiting the proposed time and that it meant inevitable surrender any way? It has been rather plausibly suggested that the Helvetians as a nation had not yet

fully assembled and that the embassy therefore felt no serious reluctance in accepting the half-month's delay. It would merely insure the more perfect concentration of the tribes. We do not know whether the ambassadors experienced any opposition in inducing the tribes to comply with the postponement of their exodus. However that may be, the Helvetii waited. Blind they must have been, for meanwhile, secretly but surely, Caesar's troops were mobilizing and the redoubts were going up on the south bank of the Rhone.

It was doubtless an exciting scene on those April Ides that followed, when the Swiss envoys returned, according to the agreement. If a suspicion of Caesar's treachery had in the meantime dawned upon the blunt intelligence of the barbarians, if evidences of stronger barricading and intrenching greeted the envoys on their second visit to the praetorium at Geneva, we may well imagine that little deference was wasted by the Helvetii upon their scorned and suspected foe. And as for Caesar, if he had possibly given out the impression of vacillation at their first conference, he was certainly masterful now. "Positively no passage could be granted". But the climax was contained in the clause that followed; "If you attempt to use force, I shall resist you". Astounded that the Roman should be thus peremptory, chagrined that they had been deceived, angry that they should even be threatened, the Helvetians in mingled confusion and wrath returned to their nation. And we may be sure that the affronted ambassadors were among the foremost in leading those impetuous, ill-concerted, disastrous sorties that followed.

Nammeius and Verucloetius disappear from the narrative and we know nothing of their subsequent career. Highest nobles that they were, they doubtless led in battle as in statecraft. The probabilities are, therefore, strong that these two chieftains perished in some one of the several conflicts with Caesar. They may have yielded up their dauntless spirits in the attempts to storm the Rhone (I. 8). They may have been cut off with the unfortunate detachment that had not yet crossed the Saône (I. 12). We should prefer to think of them as having survived these fatalities, to fall finally with the thousands of their compatriots in that last great battle near Bibracte (I. 23-26).

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### REVIEWS

Homer's Iliad: First Three Books and Selections.

Edited for the use of Schools, by J. R. Sittlington Sterrett. New York: American Book Co. (1907). Pp. VIII + 179 (text) + 270 (notes) + 161 (vocabulary).

#### PART I.

Professor Sterrett, after spending many years in travel and the study of archaeology, returns defi-

nately with this edition to the study of the epic, to which his earlier years were devoted. This latest book is a work of ripe scholarship and there is evident on every page the fruit of unwearied industry. I know of no other English edition which shows such familiarity with the land and the scenes of the Iliad, or has so many archaeological notes and illustrations. The vocabulary has been prepared with unusual pains and skill, the definitions are clear, and show taste and discernment, the etymologies are full and agree with the best in modern scholarship. In archaeological matters and in vocabulary this edition leaves little to be desired.

The explanatory notes are too numerous to be discussed in detail; so I shall make a few comments on the annotations of the first one hundred verses.

Vs. 2. "οὐλομένην: the lengthening of the first syllable (to make the word dactylic, D. 55), is found in but few words". A glance at the writings of Schulze, Danielsson and Solmsen on the subject will show that such lengthening is common. Then the reference to D. 55 (D. denotes the 53 pages, with 251 paragraphs, on the Dialect of Homer) puts οὐλομένη in the same category with ξείνος, κούρος, καλός κτλ, words in which the long syllable is due to an original digamma and is not involved in metrical lengthening. These words belong to a separate class and should not be confused with the word under discussion in the note.

Vs. 3. "Αἰδι . . . The word always refers to the god, and not . . . to the lower world". In Iliad 23. 244 there is one sure example of Hades as the name of the place.

Vs. 4. "τεύχε . . . The actions of ἔθηκεν and προλαβεν were done and over with in the past, but that of ἔτευχε was in progress in the past . . .". The time of all the verbs is the same: the aorists simply supply the details. Cf. Gildersleeve, Syntax 211: "The situation is described by the imperfect and isolated points presented by the aorist".

Vs. 5. "οἰωνοῖσι: . . . said with reference to those birds that soar in solitary (derived from οἶος alone) isolation . . .". Now turn to the vocabulary: "οἶω ὅς (ἀφιετός, eagle, avis, ὀφειωνός) . . .". Here there is no reference to the derivation given in the notes.

Vs. 6. "The slow, impressive spondees at the beginning of the verse are intended to attract one's attention and fix it on what follows". Anyone inclined to see impressive spondees might well ponder over this oft-repeated verse:

ἐς ᾧ' ἀσαμίνθους βάντες ευξέστας λούσαντο.

Vs. 16. "The masculine caesura of the fourth foot assigns δῶω to Ἀτρεΐδα, otherwise it might be taken with κοσμήτορε". This is simply a matter of editing, since it would be just as true